

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2870

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 16823

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, XO, PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN FORCE PUBLICIZED

1. THE DECEMBER 16 NEW DELHI PRESS CARRIED BRIEF REPORTS THAT A SOVIET NAVAL RELIEF FORCE ENTERED THE INDIAN OCEAN VIA THE STRAITS OF MALACCA ON DECEMBER 15. THE FORCE WAS REPORTED AS TWO DESTROYERS, TWO MINESWEEPERS, ONE LST, ONE OILER, AND ONE AUC. THE ITEM POINTED OUT THAT THE VESSELS, SENT FROM VLADIVOSTOK, WERE BELIEVED TO BE ON THEIR WAY TO RELIEVE SIMILAR RUSSIAN SHIPS ALREADY ON DUTY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT QUOTE INFORMED MILITARY SOURCES SAID THE SOVIET UNION MAINTAINS A PERMANENT INDIAN OCEAN TASK FORCE OF SOME 21 SHIPS--10 COMBAT SHIPS, AND ELEVEN SUPPORT SHIPS, INCLUDING THREE SUPPORT SHIPS ASSIGNED TO MONITOR DUTIES CONNECTED TO THE SOVIET SPACE PROGRAM. END QUOTE.

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2. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE SEEN ANY

PUBLICITY ON SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN FLEET UNITS IN THE INDIAN
PRESS. IT IS TOO SOON TO CONCLUDE THE PUBLICATION OF THIS
REPORT FORETELLS A MORE EVENHANDED GOI POLICY TOWARD US AND
SOVIET DEPLOYMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, BUT IT IS INTERESTING
AND POSSIBLY SIGNIFICANT. THE TONE OF THE PRESS ITEM
PARALLELS THE FACTUAL REPORTING OF US NAVY'S MIDWAY TASK GROUP
IN NOVEMBER AND THE REEVES TASK GROUP LAST JULY.
SAXBE

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